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TRANSITIONING SLEEP PARALYSIS INTO AN OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE (OBE)

by Robert Davis

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Although many ancient cultures value out-of-body experiences (OBEs) as authentic mystical experiences, modern Western society commonly dismisses them as imaginary or pathological, discouraging their objective discussion and exploration. As a result, most Westerners lack the understanding and skills needed to consciously shift into the out-of-body state – I certainly did. Sometimes, however, the right conditions and synchronicities can lead us to this transformational experience.

When I was 19 years old, I began to have bouts of sleep paralysis. I would wake up, fully conscious and aware, but be unable to move my body. Invariably the paralysis struck at night when the room was dark, still, and quiet. It felt eerie and I admittedly was terrified. These episodes occurred with such frequency that I couldn't ignore them.

I confided what was happening to my father, a therapist with an interest in transpersonal psychology, who suggested that I might be on the verge of an OBE. I was shocked. I had never heard of an OBE, wasn't interested, and, being a teenager, decided it was best to ignore him. Looking back, it was an unusual remark for anyone to make in the 1970s, given the general lack of knowledge on the phenomenon in America then; however, my father had read Robert Monroe's book *Journeys Out of the Body*.

Soon I was off to college and living alone. One winter morning, I woke up early for class, and after taking a quick look at the glowing green numbers of my digital clock, realized I had a few more minutes to rest and lay back down. Immediately I was overcome with sleep paralysis. As it was already daylight and I had been awake and sitting upright only moments before, I wasn't afraid. At that instant, I recalled my father's suggestion connecting my sleep paralysis to an OBE.

Not knowing anything about out-of-body travel or even believing it was possible, I decided to try to leave my body, intent on disproving my father's hypothesis. To my astonishment, I was able to effortlessly swing my nonphysical legs off the bed and stand up normally in a softly humming facsimile of my physical body – even though I had been unaware I possessed one just an instant before. Fully out of my body, I experienced an indescribable sense of ecstasy and noticed my recently injured knee didn't hurt either. I moved swiftly across the room on astral feet to go outside and look around.

Almost out of the bedroom, I paused to collect myself. Although ecstatic, I needed a moment to try to absorb what was happening. Only a few seconds earlier I had unexpectedly left my body and unwittingly departed from material existence. Yet I was still obviously very much alive and aware. Even though I had held the belief that life extends beyond the physical body, it was another matter altogether to experience it firsthand. That certainty was profound.

Noticing the light switch on the wall, I tried to see if I could flip it on. I made several attempts, but my hand passed right through the switch each time – I was delighted. It also helped me to regain my focus, so I continued moving toward the front door. Before reaching it though, I sensed that something was happening with my physical body. This very thought immediately sent me directly back into material reality and into my bed, where I discovered an unusual pulsing in my left ear. Later that morning I hustled over to the university bookstore and bought Robert Monroe's book.

Equipped only with a copy of *Journeys out of the Body*, a single OBE, and my wits, I threw myself into exploring nonphysical reality. In fact, I had little choice, given the sleep paralysis episodes were unrelenting. But now there was a difference; I was no longer afraid. Drawing on Monroe's advice and driven to learn more, I soon began polishing the skills needed to transform the paralysis into discovery and personal growth.

Most importantly, I knew I needed to remain calm when I found myself paralyzed. Once I understood and accepted this condition, I would perform some dexterity exercises by touching my nonphysical nose with my nonphysical fingers (similar to a sobriety test) and then roll over once or twice within the space of my physical body. After I felt comfortable and in control, I could easily exit by rolling out, stepping out, or even doing a backflip. Once I had exited, I simply said the words "lights on", which to my complete surprise, immediately illuminated the dark room.

Over time, I learned how to move through solid walls and doors and manage nonphysical travel at an elementary level. I never had the telltale vibrations preceding my OBEs as many people do. Instead, I would feel highly anxious before I went to sleep, though it took me some weeks to link this feeling to my OBEs. While out of body, I heard voices, received information, and had one jaw-dropping encounter with two beings dancing in the street in front of my apartment. Eventually I no longer journeyed by astral foot. I flew.

Once I even visited a close friend who, unprompted, said she had seen me clearly in her house the previous night. I vividly recall flying above several neighborhoods on my way out of town, winding my way above the dark streets to her house. There was someone flying beside me, which seemed quite normal at the time, but I could not remember later on who it was. My experience then and now is that visiting people I know while out of body is easier than traveling to specific places.

After a few months, the OBEs stopped. From one day to the next they were simply gone along with the sleep paralysis, leaving me both relieved and bewildered. While the OBEs had been transformative, they had also put a strain on me. I had become fatigued

with the almost nightly shakeups alone in a completely unknown environment, which, to say the least, seemed full of surprises. Although I came to see my sleep paralysis and OBEs as gifts, my stamina was waning and I needed a break.

Looking back, seemingly random events converged leading me to OBEs. The sleep paralysis was an obvious precursor, as was my father's suggestion connecting it to a possible OBE. In addition, had I not by chance slipped into paralysis in daylight instead of at night, I might never have dispelled the fear that had kept me frozen in bed for so long. Finally, although I had been unsure of my abilities and skeptical that OBEs even existed, I had been sufficiently open minded to find out for myself.

During this intense period, I had drawn reassurance from Monroe's book, knowing that at least one other person had had similar experiences and knew more than I knew. I promised myself then to someday visit the Monroe Institute, although it took me almost 40 years to get there. In 2019 I participated in an OBE Intensive at the Monroe Institute with the goal of trying to learn what had happened to me all those years ago. I had little aspiration of having more OBEs, especially in a formal setting. To my surprise, however, after two days they began again.